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# OPIE READ IN THE OZARKS



R. B. McKNIGHT & COMPANY, CHICAGO



# OPIE READ IN THE OZARKS

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INCLUDING MANY OF THE RICH, RARE, QUAIN'T,  
ECCENTRIC, IGNORANT AND SUPER-  
STITIOUS SAYINGS OF THE  
NATIVES OF  
MISSOURI AND ARKANSAW

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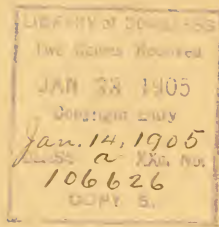
BY  
OPIE READ

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PICTURES BY  
F. I. WETHERBEE, CHICAGO

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CHICAGO  
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a.m. v. 10  
Dec. 5, 1928

## “SHAKE HANDS WITH MR. READ,”

SAYS COLONEL VISSCHER.

The publisher of this book has asked me to write an introduction to it. In this the publisher becomes the humorist. That I, or anyone else, should write an introduction to a book by Opie Read is howling and hilarious humor in itself.

However—and what a bulging barricade “However” is! However, once when I was visiting Bill Nye in his editorial rooms over a livery stable, he said:

“Now get in, old man, and write something to help fill up my page and the sooner we will get out and have some fun with the boys.”

This was long before Nye had any boys of his own, and I never have had any. So of course he meant other people’s boys.

“What shall I write about?” was propounded to Nye.

“Oh! write about a column,” said Nye, and I wrote about a column, headed, “About a Column,” and casually mentioned some of the things that might be put

into a column, and did not mention Doric, Ionic, Corinthian or Composite columns either. This being printed in Nye's newspaper, unsigned, promptly went abroad credited to Nye and in that was a whole lot of fun to me, whether or not it was humorous to others, for I thought that Nye was coming to the front rather too rapidly as a humorist and this would "give him pause."

He outlived and overcame it all, however, and there are those who will entertain perfect faith and trust that "Opie Read in the Ozarks" will be able to find the way out and into perfect success despite this back-action introduction.

WILLIAM LIGHTFOOT VISSCHER.

# Opie Read in the Ozarks

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Down in certain sections of Arkansas River bottoms there is such an air of unconcern that the first thought of a traveler is: "These people are too lazy to entertain a hope." It is, however, not wholly a condition of laziness that produces such an appearance of indolence. Laziness may play its part, and, moreover, may play it well, but it cannot hope to assume the leading rôle. What, then, is the principal actor? Chills. There are men in those bottoms who were born with a chill and who have never shaken it off.

Some time ago while riding through the Muscadine neighborhood, I came upon a man sitting on a log near the roadside. He was sallow and lean, with sharp knob cheek bones and with hair that looked like soiled cotton. The day was intensely hot, but he was sitting in the sun, although near him a tangled grapevine cast a most inviting shade.

"Good-morning," said I, reining up my horse.

"Hi."

"You live here, I suppose."

"Jest about."

"Why don't you sit over there in the shade?"

"Will when the time comes."

"What do you mean by when the time comes?"

"When the fever comes on."

"Having chills, are you?"

"Sorter."

"How long have you had them?"

"Forty-odd year."

"How old are you?"

"Forty-odd year."

"Been shaking all your life, eh?"

"Only half my life; fever was on the other half."

"Why don't you move away from here?"

"Becaze I've lived here so long that I'm afeerd I might not have good health nowhar else."

"Gracious alive, do you mean to say that having chills all the time is good health?"

"Wall, health mout be wuss. Old Nat Sarver moved up in the hills some time ago, was tuck down putty soon with some new sort of disease and didn't live more'n a week. Don't b'lieve in swappin' off suthin' that I'm used to fur suthin' I don't know nothin' about. Old-fashioned, every-day chills air good enough for me. Some folks, when they git a little up in the world, mout want to put on airs with pendercitus, dyspepsia and bronkichus, and glanders and catarrh, but, as I 'lowed to my wife the other night, old chills and fever war high enough fur us yit awhile. A chill may have its drawbacks, but it has its enjoyments, too."

"I don't see how anything about a chill can be enjoyable."

“Jest owin’ to how you air raised, as the feller says, When I have a chill it does me a power of good to stretch, and I tell you that a fust-rate stretch when a feller is in the humor ain’t to be sneezed at. I’d leave watermilon most any time to have a good stretch.



“I’ve lived here so long that I’m afeerd I might not have good health nowhar else.”

High-o-hoo!” He gaped, threw out his legs, threw back his arms and stretched himself across the log. “It’s sorter like the itch,” he went on. “The itch has its drawbacks, but what a power of good it does a man



to scratch! Had a uncle who cotch the itch in the army and he lay thar and scratched and smiled and scratched agin. In order to keep up with the demand of the occasion he sprinkled a lot of sand in his bed and tuck off all his clothes, so that every time he turned he'd be scratched all over. He kep' this up till the itch killed him, but he died a-scratchin' and a-smilin' and I reckon he was about as happy a dead man as ever lived. Wall, my fever is comin' on now and I reckon I'll git up thar under the shade."

He moved into the shade and stretched himself again.

"How long will your fever last?" I asked.

"Wall, I don't know exackly; three hours, mebby."

"Then what?"

"Wall, I'll funter around a while, chop up a little wood to git a bite to eat with, swap a hoss with some feller, mebby, and then fix myself for another chill."

"Have you much of a family?"

"Wife and grown son. He's about the ablest chiller in the country; w'y, when he's got a rale good chill on he can take hold of a tree and shake off green persimmons. W'y, he wins all the money the niggers have got, shakin' dice. Wall, have you got to go?"

"Yes."

"Wait till my fever cools down a little, and I'll beat you outen that nag you're ridin'."

"No, I don't care to walk."

"Good-bye, then. When you git tired livin' up thar

among them new-fangled diseases, come down here whar everything is old-fashioned and honest."

A party of Arkansawyers were sitting about a cross-roads store one afternoon, when a lank fellow rode up, threw his bridle reins over a peg in the rack, dismounted with a jolt and greeted the company with a "hi air you, thar."

"Putty well fur old folks," replied a fellow named Sam Stewart.

"This here is the postoffice, hain't it?"

"That's the sort of a comical 'porium she is," Sam replied.

"Who is the postmarster?"

"Wall, suh, the postmarster is the man what you now have the honor of addressin'."

"Glad to hear it. I moved in here from Missouri a few weeks ago, and want a letter that's here for me."

"What's yo' name?"

"Dad Knox."

"Wall, Dad Knox, thar ain't nothin' here fur you."

"Air you right shore?"

"I am so shore that I know thar ain't."

"Wall, but see here; just about the time I left Missouri, Ab. Boyle 'lowed that he would write to me in a few days, and I want you to understand that Ab. ain't no liar."

"Didn't say he was a liar. Said thar wa'n't no letter here fur you and thar hain't, that's all thar is about it."

"No, it's not quite all there is about it. Ab. was never known to tell a lie and he said he would write to me. How about that?"

"That ain't nuthin' about it."

"Yas, thar is somethin' about it."

"Wall, what is thar?"

"It's jest this: Thar's a letter in this office for me, an' I'm goin' to have it."

"Look here, bones, if thar was fifty letters in here fur you, you couldn't git 'em lessen I said so."

"You don't say so?"

"That's exactly what I say."

"Why, you don't know me, do you?"

"No, and I ain't hurtin' atter yo' 'quaintance."

"Wall, if it's any information, I will remark that I am the man that made Jesse James run once."

"That's nuthin', so fur as personal 'complishment goes. These boys will tell you that I spit at a wild hog once and raised a three-cornered blister between his eyes."

"You don't begin to say so! And atter all it is a putty good personal 'complishment. It's strange, though, that you never hearn of me. I grabbed a panther once and tied a knot in his tail, and it took him three weeks of close attention to business to get it out."

"You don't say so! But after all that was doin' putty well fur a man that simply wanted to throw away his time. I uster idle away my time that a-way. I ricolleck once that I was out in the Rocky Mountains



"These boys will tell you that I spit at a wild hog once and raised a three-cornered blister between his eyes."



when who should come along but a grizzly bear that I wasn't acquainted with at all, but I spoke to him sorter polite like, and he ups with his paw and struck at me. I told him not to take such violent exercise just after dinner, but he frowned on my advice and struck at me agin. Then I got sorter riled, and I grabbed him, snatched out his tongue, split it, and tied the ends over the top of his head. Yes, I used to be a good deal of a idler."

The point of this narrative is that no slim, gentlemanly fellow came up just at that moment and made the two boasting bullies eat dirt; neither did the post-master's wife appear and lead her lord away by the ear. There are, after all, a great many unconventional things in this world.

"Have you any excuse?" asked the judge of a man who had been summoned on the jury.

"Yes, sir, my wife is sick."

"Not a legal excuse. We want a good jury for this case, a case of train-robbing. Any other excuse?"

"Yes, sir, I have rheumatism."

"Not a legal excuse."

"I used to live in Missouri."

"You did? Well, then, get out of here. We don't want you."

A little, old, squint-eyed Guinea negro got on board a train at a lonely way-station in Arkansaw. He carried a number of bundles and appeared to have a lot



of carpet-rags tied up in a blanket. He whirled a seat over, stuffed in his belongings and sat down. The conductor came along. The little old negro



“Yes, sah, an’ he had his arm restin’ on a sort o’ shelf, an’ a stomp wuz on de shelf wid its handle stickin’ up like er cat’s tail.”

looked up at him as if he had found an object of keenest interest.

“Ticket.”

“Sah?”

"Your ticket."

"Yas, sah, yas," he said, beginning to feel in his waistcoat pockets, slowly, first in one and then in the other, and all the while keeping up his look of keen interest. "Yas, sah, I bought dis yere ticket fur you. I says ter a man, I says, 'Who's on dat kyarh dat's comin' yander?' an' he tole me, he did, an' I says, I says, 'I'm gwine git er ticket fur dat man sho nuff.' Yas, sah."

"Are you going to give me the ticket?"

"Who, me? Yas, sah," (continuing to search his pockets). "Dat's whut I gwine do, caze ez I tells you, I bought it fur you. Yas, sah. An' ez I stepped up on de platfawm Mr. Henderson wuz er standin' right dar" (pointing to the floor) "an' I says, 'Good mawnin', Mr. Henderson, good mawnin', sah.' W'y, I allus speaks ter Mr. Henderson. I'se knowed him—w'y, I uster split bo'ds fur him. Yas, sah. I says, I says, 'Good mawnin', Mr. Henderson,' an' he say, 'Good mawnin', Mr. Henderson did, an' den I says, I says, 'Good mawnin', Mr. Henderson.' I wuz tellin' him good-bye den. Yas, sah. An' den I stepped roun' yere ter whar Mr. Wiley wuz er standin' in er sort o' cage. Mr. Wiley is de man whut sells de tickets, an' he doan kere who he sells 'em to, nuther, I tell you. Yas, sah, an' he had his arm restin' on a sort o' shelf, an' a stomp wuz on de shelf wid its handle stickin' up like er cat's tail, an' I thought he wuz gwine take er ticket frum dis side w'en I said, 'Mr. Wiley, I got ter hab er ticket fur dat man comin'

on dat kyarh yander.'—Yas, sah, thought he gwine take de ticket frum dis side, but he tuck de ticket frum ober dar, an' he stuck it out on de shelf an' stomped it wid de cat's tail, an' yere it is. Uck, I come in one o' findin' it den. But ain't it funny how clost you kin come ter findin' er ticket an' den not find it?"

"Are you going to——"

"Yas, sah, dat's whut I'm doin'. I doan want de ticket. I ain't runnin' no railroad. But ef I wuz runnin' er railroad I'd want de ticket, huh? Yas, sah. Ez I come er roun' yere by de cornder o' de house—water barrel up ergin' de cornder o' de house—didn't want ter run ergin de water barrel—Mr. Henderson wuz er standin' right dar, an' I says, I says, 'Good mawnin', Mr. Henderson,' and Mr. Henderson he say, 'Good mawnin',' an'——"

"Confound Mr. Henderson!" exclaimed the conductor.

"I—I—I doan kere ef you confound him, sah. Do you know dat dat man's yaller dog bit me? Yas, he did, an' ef you wuz ter be bit by er dog whut sort o' dog you ruther be bit by, er black dog ur yaller dog, huh?"

"Look here, I'm not going to keep fooling with you. Give me that ticket."

"No, sah, you ain't gwine keep foolin' wid me. W'en I seed you comin' I says, I says, 'Yander comes er man dat ain't gwine keep foolin' wid me.' Yas, sah, yere's yo' ticket" (bringing up the lint from the bottom of his woolly pocket). "Uck, I thought I had it

den. Whut pocket you reckon I put it in, dis yere one ur dis yere one? But I knows I had it, fur I says, says I, 'Mr. Wiley, I mus' hab er ticket fur dat man,' an' Mr. Wiley he tuck down er ticket an' stomped it wid de cat's tail an'—ain't it funny whut comes o' er man's ticket?"

"I'm going through the train," said the conductor, "and when I come back I must have that ticket. Do you hear?"

"Oh, yas, sah, I yeres, caze I ain't deaf. But ef I wuz deaf I couldn't yere, could I? Yas, sah, I'll hab it fur you gin you gits back, caze I knows whar it is. Yas, sah."

The conductor went away and the little old negro sat looking out of the window whistling. Presently the conductor came back.

"Did you find that ticket?"

"Whut ticket?" (with a look of blank astonishment). "Oh, dat ticket" (beginning again to search his pockets). "'Fo de Lawd, I didn't know at fust whut ticket de man meant. Yas, sah, I found it. Oh, I knowd whar it wuz, an' I says, I did, 'Yere's dat white man's ticket now.' An' yere's yo' ole ticket. Uck, I thought I had it den." (A look of surprise came over his face.) "Whut I do wid dat ticket? Anybody seed er ticket roun' yere?" (After a silence)—"Ez I come roun' by de platfawm Mr. Henderson wuz er standin' right dar an' I says——"

"Where are you going?" the conductor asked.

"Sah?"



"You heard what I said. Where are you going?"

"Up yere ter Bolton, sah."

"Well, give me forty cents."

"Would you ges' lieve hab de money?" (with a look of delight).

"Yes."

"You ain't foolin' me, is you? But you wouldn't fool er ole nigger man, would you? You shall hab de money. I allus has forty cents. Ever' time folks sees me gwine 'way frum home da say, 'Yander goes de man wid forty cents.' W'y, I flings forty cences erway. Folks sees me gwine 'long swingin' my han' dis way an' da think I'se sowin' oats. I ain't; I'se throwin' forty cences erway. Ain't it funny whut will come o' er man's money?" (Grabbling in his pockets.) "Uck, I come in one o' gittin' it den. But ain't it funny how clost er man will come te gittin' money an' den not git it? Uck, I come in one o' gittin' it den." (After a silent fumbling)—"Mr. Wiley wuz standin' in de cage an' he stomped de ticket wid de cat's tail, an'——"

"I'll put you off," said the conductor, as he reached up and pulled the bell-rope. The train stopped. The old man gathered up his bags and his bundles, and as he backed out of the door he said:

"I'se 'bleeged ter you, sah; I'se much er 'bleeged ter you. But I dun out-talked you. I live in dat cabin up yander an' yere is whar I wuz gwine git off anyhow."



A story illustrating a somewhat original excuse, is told on a Hebrew clothing merchant of Little Rock. A man went in to buy a bonnet for his wife. The merchant treated him with great politeness, and as



“My friendt, I voud do it in a minute, but I voud have to scratch my books and den I voud lose mine insurance.”

he had no bonnets, induced him to buy an overcoat. The next day the man returned and said: “Look here, I can’t keep this coat.”

“Why?” the astonished merchant asked.

“Well, because my wife says that I did wrong in

buying it and swears that you must take it back and give me my money."

"My friendt," said the merchant, "I voud do it in a minute, but I voud have to scratch my books and den I voud lose mine insurance."

The forced customer wore the coat about three weeks and then it dropped off.

William P. Hester had written three poems, one on "The Depth of True Love" and two on "The Rose" and "The Lily," respectively, when he married a widow Hoss. He had fondly looked forward to a literary career, but the appearance of the widow as she came into church one Sunday, dressed in a new yellow calico gown, snatched his attention and held it in a tight clutch. The very next day he put his pen on the mantel piece and devoted himself to yearning love. Mrs. Hester had a small farm comparatively free from mortgage and a new wagon with thimble-skein axles. Had the poet previously felt any doubt as to the enduring quality of his love, the sight of that wagon as it stood under the shed with a dominecker rooster parading up and down the seat, would have settled it.

Well, shortly after they were married, the poet, as all true men of letters do, began to grow tired of wedded life. He spoke to his wife about "this here matrimonial yoke," but she replied that he was such a steer that he needed a yoke. He went off down in the woods and then mused. "I have made a mistake," said he, "but what poet did not; and what is the great mistake

that nearly all poets have made? Marriage. The most widely recognized quality of poetic genius is the inability to stand the marriage depression. To submit quietly is an acknowledgment of inferiority, at least the world will so regard it. The world believes that genius must buck up against incompatibility. Now, if I should have trouble with my wife, the world will say, 'Ah, he is a true poet,' and then I shall receive orders from magazines and then—fame. I must move at once in this matter. The truth is, I could get along with my wife, for after all she is a gentle creature, but I was born a poet and nature must take her sweet course."

He strolled on back toward the house. It was the gentle spring time, and his wife burning beef bones that she had gathered up in the yard. "I must have some little excuse for my tirade," he said to himself. When he approached she turned to him and squinted, for her eyes were full of smoke.

"Are you offering up sweet incense to the gods?" he asked.

"No, I'm burnin' these here beef bones, an' ef you kin find anything sweet in thar smell, w'y yo' nose has got suthin' the matter with it, that's all."

"Woman," he slowly began, "I see that you are no lover of a touch divine. You are too coarse and low for me, the poet. I must therefore banish you."

"You must do what?" she asked, wiping the smoke from her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"I must banish you from my realm of poesy. Go."



"I don't exactly know what you mean," she answered, "but I don't 'low to take no chances," and with that she snatched up a wash-board and split it over his head. As he was hastening down the lane, a



"I don't exactly know what you mean, but I don't 'low to take no chances."

few moments later, one of the neighbors whom he met asked: "Which way, Hester?" but he made no reply. He went to the editor of the county paper, to tell him a sad story of the domestic infelicities of genius. "It is here that my fame is to begin," he

mused as he ascended the stairs. He told the editor, and the next issue of the Dumpsy County Broad Axe contained the following:

"Bill Hester, the fool that thinks that he can write, has had trouble with his wife. He thought that he could hector her but he slipped up on himself. He did not know that woman. Some time before she married old Hoss she was our wife. We married her after she had got through with a poor old fool named Gollier. We gave her our young love, and at first she appeared to love us, but we don't believe she did; at least when she knocked us down and stamped us, we came to the conclusion that our opinion had been rashly formed."

The woman sent the following message to Hester:

"It is time the craps was bein' put in, an' ef you don't come back here an' go to work I will come atter you an' w'ar you out with a bull whip that I have used with great success on fo' men."

A man, while riding along the county road, saw Hester plowing. "Bill," said the man, "you seem to be in a hurry."

"Yes. Me and my wife agreed that the crops ought to be got in as soon as possible."

"I do not see any peculiarity about your people," said an Eastern judge, addressing his traveling companion, a well-known Arkansas lawyer. "I have traveled quite extensively in this state, and I have not as yet, found that eccentricity of action and prevarication of reply that has often amused me in the newspapers."



"You have done most of your traveling by rail," the lawyer replied. "This is your first trip away from the main road, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll show you some of our genuine natives. Yonder is a house. Call the landlord, and converse with him."

"Hallo!" called the judge.

"Comin'!" the man replied, depositing a child in the doorway, and advancing.

"How's all the folks?"

"Children's hearty; wife's not well. Ain't what you might call bed-sick, but jest sorter stretchy."

"Got anything to eat in the house?"

"Ef I had it anywhere, I'd have it in the house."

"How many children have you?"

"Many as I want."

"How many did you want?"

"Wa'n't hankerin' arter a powerful chance, but I'm satisfied."

"How long have you been living here?"

"Too long."

"How many years?"

"Been here ever since my oldest boy was born."

"What year was he born?"

"The year I come here."

"How old is your boy?"

"Ef he had lived, he would have been the oldest until yit; but, as he died, Jim's the oldest."

"How old is Jim?"

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"He ain't as old as the one what died."

"Well, how old was the one that died?"

"He was older than Jim."

"What do you do here for a living?"

"Eat."



"How far is it to the next house?"

"It's called three miles, but the man what calls it that is a liar."

"How do you get anything to eat?"

"The best way we kin."

"How do you spend your Sundays?"

"Like the week days."

"How do you spend them?"

"Like Sundays."

"Is that your daughter, yonder?"

"No, sir; she ain't my daughter yonder, nor nowhar else."

"Is she a relative of yours?"

"No, sir; no kin."

"Kin to your wife, I suppose."

"No kin to my wife, but she's kin to my children."

"How do you make that out?"

"She's my wife."

"How far is it to the next house?"

"It's called three miles, but the man what calls it that is a liar."

"I've got enough," said the Judge, turning to the lawyer. "Drive on. I pity the man who depends on this man for information."

A negro woman in Arkansas borrowed a dozen eggs from a neighbor, and instead of returning a dozen, brought back only eleven.

"How's dis?" the lender asked.

"How's whut, lady?"

"W'y you borrid er dozen aigs frum me but dar ain't but erleben yere. How does you 'count fur dat?"

"I 'counts fur it mighty easy. Dem aigs I got frum you wa'n't right full."

"Wa'n't right full! Whut you means by dat?"

"I means dat da wa'n't full—dat de hens whut laid 'em wa'n't right honest. Deze aigs dat I have fotch you is full up ter de brim; an' yo' kain't 'spect me ter

fetch you er dozen full aigs fur er dozen dat wa'n't right full. Oh, I's squar', I is."

A fanciful fellow who once passed through the neighborhood said that the spirit of poesy in Arkansas, after a wild, dangerous and troublous flight among the mountains, had stolen into Honeycutt county to take a nap. Through this county ran a small river and, at its purest, it was as clear as the drop of honey in a poplar bloom; and up and down the stream were bluffs fringed with vines and bejeweled here and there with larkspur.

Contemptuous people called this neighborhood the "pennyrile district." The soil was not rich and the people were poor, but they were happy; for there was naught to stimulate them to an unhealthful ambition. They heard none of the boasts that progress makes. They were out of the world and knew not that the real world existed.

Josh Tabb, the poet, lived in Honeycutt. He was not a poet by education, but by instinct. His intellectual training had been nipped off shortly after it had been begun, but his spirit did not die at the sight of his withered education. He sang the song of environment, and wrote the "for sale" notices of "intramural commerce." The notices were sprawled in rhyme, and the door of the blacksmith shop was often ablaze with inspired scraps announcing the fact that some one was willing to part with a bull-tongue plow. I think that his happiest effort was the following:



“John Edwards has two calves for sale,  
The offspring of a cow that gives milk by the pail—  
They are a mighty smooth bargain, yea, slicker than  
grease,  
For he’ll sell these here calves at three dollars apiece.”

Josh was a tall, powerful fellow, and women smiled upon him, and, being a gallant man and a poet, he smiled in return; but he gave them no fraction of his heart. An old man once upbraided him for his niggardliness, and the poet thus replied:

“When nature comes along and says, ‘Josh, love this here woman!’ I’ll say, ‘All right, ma’am!’ and right there I’ll love her, but not before. I don’t want any half measures; I must meet a woman that fills my cup, and when I do meet her, I’ll give her a love that will make the moon blush and the stars blink. Oh, I’ve got a love that stands ready to snort and plunge like a tormented steer.”

“Joshie,” said the old man, “if it want fur some of the ‘fur sale’ notices you’ve writ, I’d have to put you down as not havin’ sense enough to skin a squirr’l. I’m a putty old man and I’ve seed mighty nigh all the world that’s worth seein’—I’ve been to Fort Smith and I went on a raft nearly to Little Rock once; and I’ve been married three times, and I want to say that if you are waitin’ for love to jolt you like bein’ hit with a maul, why, you might as well give up right now. Take my advice, Joshie, and marry some chunk of a gal, and settle down. My experience tells me that women air putty much the same. One may have a few more

whims than another, but they've all got 'em. There are half a dozen gals around here, ary one o' which would make you a good wife, an' you'd better take one of 'em ruther than to wait for a love that will make the stars blink and all that sort of thing."



"My experience tells me that women air putty much the same. One may have a few more whims than another, but they've all got 'em."

"You are a pretty wise man, Uncle John," the poet rejoined, "but there are some things in this life that you don't know. You are built accordin' to one plan,

and I'm put up by another sort of measurement. I'm a poet. Nature has made you quick at figures, but she has given me the power to feel. What might be agreeable to you would be a grain of sand in my eye. And now don't you worry about my not marryin'. My time will come after a while. Somebody may come along that will not only fill my cup, but run it over."

"That mout all be true, Joshie; that mout all be a leetle mo' than true, if possible; but it is better to have yo' cup not quite full than to have it sloshed over, fur thar ain't nothin' that's much worse than waste. An' now here: Suppose a woman do fill yo' cup, an' then turn away from it. In other words, suppose she won't have you after the stars have done blunk?"

"I'll have to look out for that, I reckon, Uncle John; we all have to take our chances as we go along. But even when I was a boy something kept on tellin' me that I would one day be set on fire by a great love. And then I won't write a notice of a calf for sale and stick it upon a door; I will write something that will wring tears out of the souls of men. Oh, I know that some folks have a sort of contempt for me because I am a poet, but they can't call me lazy, and they can't say that I have ever flinched in the presence of danger."

"That's all true enough," the old man said, "but bein' true don't take away none of the bother of it. I am might'ly interested in you, or I wouldn't have talked to you in this way. I have watched you grow up from a boy, and, although you ain't no blood kin to me, I feel that I have a claim on you. You air too

good a man to waste your life in honin' and hankerin' for somethin' that in reason can't come to you. Well, I must be movin'," the fellow added. They had met in the road that overlooked the river. "Good-bye, Joshie, an' think over what I've said."

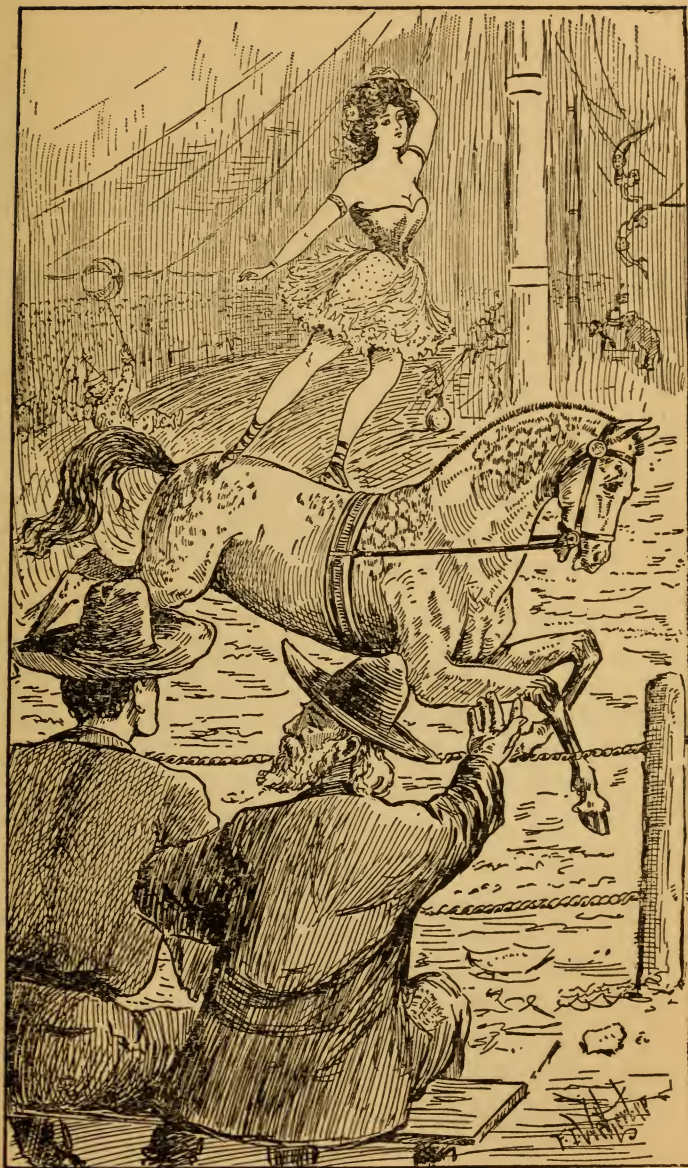
"All right, Uncle John, and at the same time you'd better think over what I've said."

The old man walked a short distance and then, halting, turned and gazed at the young fellow as he stode along the bluff. The sun was going down and the old man shaded his eyes from the dazzling searchlight thrown from the river.

The young man loitered aimlessly, and then rolled a stone from the brow of the cliff.

A great excitement was spread throughout Honeycutt county. A circus was coming, and glaring bills were on the blacksmith shop, rudely posted over the barter Iliads of Josh Tabb, the poet. It was the first circus that had ever declared its intention to come into this dozing neighborhood, and it was hard to believe that the posters were not evidences of a cruel flirtation rather than a promise that should be fulfilled. Old Uncle John did not believe that there was an elephant; and as for a camel, why, the entire breed passed away when Jerusalem fell. But the circus came, and with it were an elephant and a camel. The elephant was badly worn, and bore the appearance of having been patched here and there with a quality of leather somewhat inferior to the original material; and a more dejected looking creature than the camel





"I gad, Joshie, ef I could cut that caper thar ain't no power that could keep me outen the Legislatur. Look thar, will you?"

could not have existed. It was blind of an eye, and its hair appeared to have been singed off in places. The entire outfit consisted of three wagons, a few pack mules and a half dozen actors. But it was a great day for Honeycutt county, and when the performance began, Uncle John and the poet sat near the ring. A bareback rider threw a backward somersault through a hoop and Uncle John, whispering to Josh, said:

"I'd come mighty nigh bettin' a steer that he can't do that agin."

And just then the rider did it again, and Uncle John again whispered:

"*Did* you see that? I-gad, Joshie, ef I could cut that caper thar ain't no power that could keep me outen the Legislatur. Look thar, will you?"

A gauzed, pinked and bespangled young woman had taken her place on a broad pad, and was galloping around the ring. The old man nudged Josh, but the poet heeded him not. The young woman shouted at her slow horse. Uncle John nudged the poet, and Josh turned with a look that startled the old man.

"Why, what's the matter, Josh?"

"The stars will blink," the poet hoarsely whispered.

The performance came to an end. The people, stupid with so sudden a hurl back to the "prosaics" of life, looked at one another and began to move away.

"Come on, Joshie," said Uncle John.

"I can't come. I must see her."

"But they won't let you see her. Come on."

"I will see her."

"Get out, all that haven't got tickets for the concert," a man shouted; and Uncle John got out, but the poet remained.

At the night performance Uncle John found the poet near the ring, and sat down beside him.

"Did you git to see her?" the old man asked.

"No, they wouldn't let me, but my time will come."

"But, Joshie, do you really think she's as putty as Sue Morris?"

"She's as far ahead of Sue as a hummin' bird is of a grasshopper."

"Wall, I can't hardly agree with you, Joshie. This here gal is putty an' all that, but you put the same sort of rig on Sue Morris, an' she'd look powerful peart, I tell you. I like the women folks an' all that, but the feller that flops through that hoop ketches me."

The performance was over, and rough men were pulling down the tent. The poet stood in the shifting light of a spluttering torch, sadly gazing at the work of destruction. Uncle John approached him, touched him on the shoulder and asked:

"Are you goin' now, Joshie?"

"No."

"How long befo' you will be ready?"

"I'm goin' to talk to her."

"Josh, don't be foolish. Come on."

The young man turned upon him with a look of contempt.

"It is the smallness of your soul that calls the depth of my soul foolish. You have lived many years, but



I am livin' longer every minit now than five lives as long as yours. Uncle John, I've got no kinfolks to speak of, and I think mo' of you than I do of any man, but you mustn't talk to me like that."

"I'm sorry I done it, Joshie, an' I won't do it agin; but don't you think you'd better come on now? I'm afeerd that you mout get into some sort of a fight with these here folks. See, they've got the whole thing loaded an' air about ready to drive off. Come on."

"No."

"Wall, but what air you goin' to do?"

"Follow her—marry her."

"Nonsense, man."

"You said you wouldn't talk that way agin."

"I ain't talkin' that way, Joshie; ain't talkin' that way no sich thing. But you can't marry her. See, they are drivin' off. Come on."

The torch had been taken away, and they were now standing in the dark.

"Good-bye, Uncle John."

"What! you ain't a-goin' sho' nuff?"

"Good-bye, Uncle John."

"Wait a minit, Josh. But say, when may we 'spect you back?"

"I will never come back until she comes with me."

The poet trudged along the road. A heavy rain was falling, but he heeded it not. When daylight came, the "caravan" halted to prepare for a parade in the presence of the people of Hickory Flat.

"What are you doin' here?" a rough man asked.



"Attendin' to my own affairs," the poet answered.

"But we've got all the men we want, and don't need you."

"I haven't asked you if you needed me."

"Well, that's all right, but you had better go about your business."

"You can't keep a man from goin' along the public road, can you?"

"No, but we can keep you from goin' in this show."

"Not if I pay my way."

The days passed, and still the poet followed the circus. The desolate camel appeared to have taken a liking to him, and for hours they would walk side by side.

One afternoon, in a moment of boldness, he spoke to the girl. She smiled upon him, and that night while plodding along, he talked to the desolate camel. One day the girl came to him and said:

The manager says that you must go away—says he has told you so two or three times."

"I will go away when you go with me."

She laughed. "I can't go with you."

"But you must. I told Uncle John that I would never return to Honeycutt county without you, an' I won't. Listen to me. I am a poet an' I love you. Wait. I am the only man that can love. Other men have loved, but they are all dead. Will you go back with me?"

The woman's voice was soft with a new and peculiar kindness when she answered him. "Oh, you

mustn't say that," she said. "You must go on back and not think about me. I couldn't marry you. We would be so far apart in everything."

"Oh, I know you are a heap better than me," he rejoined.

"I could almost love you for saying that," she declared; and then impulsively she continued: "Better than you? Why, I'm not half so good. I am simply a friendless woman who is trying to make her own way, and a poor enough way it is. But won't you please go on back? The manager says he doesn't want any trouble with you, but that you must stop following the show."

"If he don't want any trouble with me, he'd better let me alone."

"But won't you go back?"

"Not till you go **with me.**"

"But that is impossible."

"Listen to me," he said, in a voice hardened with the tone of command. "I believe that it is the will of God that you shall go home with me. It may seem impossible now, but before long it may be perfectly clear. There is a disposition in this here world to tread on the lowly poets, but let me tell you that they are the true apostles of the Lord. Will you go back with me now?"

"You are simply a foolish boy. No, I can't go with you."

"Wait a moment," he cried, but the woman ran away.

The show had wound its way among the thin settlements of southwest Missouri, had turned about and was now within twelve miles of the Honeycutt bluffs. The "grand aggregation" had put up its canvas near



"Stand back or I'll kill the last one of you. She is mine now—she's goin' home with me."

Walnut Hill. The afternoon's performance was soon to begin. The girl stood just within the doorway of the "dressing room." The poet spoke to her.

"It's just twelve miles to where I live," he said.

"Then it won't take you long to get home," she replied, smiling at him.

"It might as well be ten thousand miles unless you agree to go with me."

"Well, then, ten thousand be it. I have been very patient with you, but I'm getting tired now. They have begun to laugh at me, and I can't stand that."

Just then she was summoned, and she tripped away to gallop around the ring. The poet took his accustomed place and sat gazing at her. Rain was falling and the tent was leaking. The horse stepped into a puddle and slipped just as the girl was about to jump over a banner. She shrieked and fell—her head struck and she lay there. In a second the poet was bending over her. A number of showmen rushed forward.

"Back," shouted the poet, springing up with a pistol in his hand. "Stand back or I'll kill the last one of you. She is mine now—she's goin' home with me."

\* \* \* \* \*

The sun was sinking and Uncle John was strolling along the bluffs. He heard the rattle of a wagon, and, looking up, he saw some one slowly driving toward him.

"Why, if here ain't Joshie!" he cried. "What air you doin' with this here wagon, an' whar is ther gal that was comin' back with you? I'll climb in and ride with you. But whar's the gal, Joshie?"

The poet caught the old man's arm and, pointing said: "In the coffin."



The first prisoner that "graced" the new jail at Oak Knob, the county seat of Patterson county, Arkansas, was a young fellow named Dave Chillew. He was a stranger in this romantic community, which went far toward proving that he had stolen the horse. It was a fact that a roan mare was stolen and that circumstances pointed with a steady finger at the stranger. This being quite sufficient, he was put in jail.

Oak Knob could hardly be classed as a village; indeed it scarcely held the dignity of a cross-road point of importance. Its buildings consisted of a courthouse, which also served as a church; a general supply store, a few "residences," and the jail, a strong log pen with an iron-grated door.

Lige Morgan, sheriff and jailer, lived within a few rods of the jail.

Net Morgan, the old man's daughter, returned from school, in an adjoining neighborhood, one evening, and was told that a prisoner had at last been secured for the jail and that it was her duty to feed him. At this appointment to high and important trust the girl jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Oh, that's fine!" she cried.

"Glad you like it," said the old man, "for I don't want nothin' to do with a hoss-thief, and yo' mother 'lows she wouldn't feed one to save his life."

"I don't like a hoss-thief better than you and mother do," she quickly replied, coloring and dropping her hands with a limpness that marked the sickness, if not the death, of her enthusiasm. "I never did have any

use for a thief of no sort, much less a hoss-thief, and if I have to take care of him just because you think I like him better than the rest of you do, why, I won't have anything to do with him."

"Come, now, Net, I don't want any of your foolishness. Of course you don't like a hoss-thief any better than the rest of us does, but I want you to take charge of him and feed him until after cou't meets and tries him. If you don't I'll hire Nan Stokes——"

"I'll feed him, pap. What sort of a lookin' man is he?"

"Looks well enough. It's the way he acts that got him into trouble."

"Believe I'll go out there and see who he's like."

"You can't see out there now. It's too dark."

"I can take a light. If he's my prisoner I must do as I please about him."

She took down a spluttering tallow candle and went out to the jail.

"Hello, in there," she said, holding up the candle high above her head and attempting to shake the grated door.

There was a rustling of straw and then a voice answered,

"Well."

"Come up here so I can see you," said the girl.

He came to the door. "I can't see you very well now," she remarked, trying to throw more light on him and pressing her face against the bars. "I never saw a live hoss-thief, and I want to see what you look like."



"I never saw a live hossthief, and I want to see what you look like."



"I'm not a horse-thief, miss or madam, I don't know which."

"Miss, if you please. I ain't but fifteen years old, and I don't reckon you see many madams as young as that. I can't see whether you stole that hoss or not."

He laughed with a loud haw-haw, and then said, "Just like a woman."

"Of course, for I am a woman, or the making of one, anyhow. Well, I'll have to wait until to-morrow before I can settle yo' case. Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that I am your keeper, and you can't have anything to eat except what I am a mind to give you."

"I hope, then, that your mind is liberal, miss."

"I don't know about that; I'll have to wait until I get a good look at you."

"Just like a woman again," he said.

"I'm just like a woman all the time," she replied.

"And I never before had cause to wish for good looks," he rejoined.

She went away without saying another word and the prisoner went back and lay down on his straw bed.

Sunbeams were falling through the bars when he awoke the next morning, and an old rooster and several hens stood pecking at the doorsill.

The chickens moved hastily away and then the girl stood there looking at him.

"Good mornin'."

"Good morning, miss." He went to the door and smiled at her.



"Your mouth ain't so pretty that you need to smile," she said, and then, after studying him closely, added, "I don't know whether you stole that hoss or not. When I look at you this way [moving to the left] I think you did, but when I stand here [moving to the right] I don't believe you did."

"Well, then," he replied, pointing to the right, "you'd better feed me from that side."

"Oh, you are just like a man," she laughed, "but I'm just like a woman; I'm afraid that I'll have to look at you from the worst side."

"If I were a woman I know you would, but as I am not, I thought that you would seek to see me at my best."

"Now, Mr. Smarty, just for that I'll not give you much of a breakfast;" and she didn't either; but she made up for it at noontime.

"I have brought my sewing," she said, "and am going to sit out here in the shade and talk to you. This is the first time I ever had a man where I could talk to him as long as I wanted to."

He looked at her with a pleased expression, and she sat down and began to sew.

"Where are you from?" she asked, looking up.

"Oh, from almost everywhere."

"How long have you been in this country?"

"Only a few days—hadn't been here but a short time until I was arrested."

"That was too bad—that is, if you are innocent."

"And I am, miss—what is your name?"

"Net."

"And I am innocent, Miss Net."

"I don't know, but I reckon court will settle that point when it meets."

"Yes, but I'm afraid it will not be settled in the right way."

"I don't know about that, but I know it will be settled."

"I hope it will soon be settled one way or the other, for I don't like the idea of staying very long in this pen."

"Yes, but when it is settled you may go to a worse one."

"That's consoling, surely; but do you really think they will send me to the penitentiary?"

"What a funny question to ask one! How do I know? But, say, tell me how they come to accuse you."

"Oh, they found me walking along the road and took me up. I had no horse."

"But Zeb Brown says that you passed his house ridin' one, and if that's the case, what did you do with him?"

"I did not pass his house riding a horse."

"But he will swear you did, and will give it as his opinion that you was afraid of bein' caught and sold the horse to somebody."

"Get up here, little girl, and look at me—look into my eyes."

She got up and after gazing into his eyes, said, "No,

you didn't steal a horse. You couldn't do such a thing, and I will believe you no matter who swears against you."

"I could kiss you for those generous words."

"No, you couldn't, for I wouldn't let you. I wouldn't want a man to come kissing me for my words, anyway. If he couldn't kiss me for myself he shouldn't kiss me at all."

"You can safely talk of kissing to a man in jail. How long before court meets?"

"About a week."

"As I am the only man to be tried, I suppose they will get through with me in short order."

"I reckon so; and I do hope they won't send you to the penitentiary, for now that I know that you didn't steal that horse I like you ever so much."

"And I like you," he said.

"Oh, of course," she laughed, "for a man always likes anybody that feeds him. But I like you sho' nuff. I think yo' eyes are just lovely."

"You make me blush, little miss; and wouldn't that be a novel sight—a blushing jail-bird?"

She fed him on chicken and hot biscuits, and at evening sang to him. She declared that he was her first and only beau. "But," she always added, "I would hate you if I thought you stole a horse."

One morning she brought him more than the usual amount of food, and when he marveled at the abundance she said:

"This must do you a day."

"Why so?"

"Because I am going away and won't be back until late this evenin'."

The day was a weary one to the prisoner and he longed for evening. The sun went down, the stars came out. A dog whined, and then a cheerful voice said:

"I'm back again."

"Yes," he cried, "and just in time to give a soft touch to the hardest day I ever spent."

"Oh, what a flatterer you are! but you didn't steal the horse, did you?"

"No, little girl, I'll swear I didn't."

"I know you didn't—I know you couldn't. I've got news for you."

"What is it?"

"Court meets to-morrow."

"I'm glad, and yet I'm afraid."

"You must not let them see that you are scared. I'll sit by you durin' the trial."

She did sit beside him the next day, and when the judge, after hearing the verdict, sentenced him to the penitentiary for five years, she hung her head and wept.

It was evening and the prisoner was taken back to his cell. A dark night came on, and the wretched man, knowing that on the morrow he should be taken away, lay on his straw bed, wishing that he might die. Hours passed. He was deserted. The dog whined.

"Keep quiet, Bose," some one whispered, and the girl said, softly:



"You thought I had forgot you."

Yes."

"But I didn't. I wanted the key and had to wait till pap went to sleep. They had a feller to guard you, but I got him drunk. Pop's drunk, too," she giggled.

"What are you going to do?" the prisoner asked, almost breathlessly.

"I'm goin' to let you out, but you must do exactly as I tell you and not say a word. If you try to run away they will catch you to-morrow, but if you follow my plan they never will find you. Come on, now."

She had unlocked the door. "Come 'round this way and don't say a word. There's old Bose dog, but he don't amount to anything. If he had, I'd have got him drunk, too. This way, now."

They went into the woods, where the timber and underbrush were so thick that they had to pick their way along.

"Let's stop here and rest a minute," she said.

"Are we far enough away?"

"Yes, and they can't find us anyway when they're drunk." She giggled again.

"Little woman, you are an angel."

"No, simply a girl that don't want to see an innocent man go to the penitentiary."

"God bless you!" he said.

"And may God bless you!" she replied, "and bless you, and bless you and keep on a-blessin' you till you are safe from the folks about here."

"But what will they do with you, little girl?"

"They won't do anything to me. Pap will scold and rear and pitch, but that will be all."

"But won't the officers of the law put you in jail?"

"It wouldn't be good for one of them if he was to try it. Mother says I'm awful when I get started, and sometimes I reckon I am. We'd better go on now."

"All right, but don't you think you'd better go back?"

"If I was to leave you now you'd wander about in the woods till they find you."

"What time do you suppose it is?" he asked.

"About three o'clock."

"And where will we be if we keep on going?"

"We'll get to the river about daylight."

"And then what?"

"I will show you."

Sometimes coming upon a place less dense, they walked briskly, and then, entering the thick underbrush, they were compelled to pick their way along.

"It's growing lighter," he said.

"Yes," she answered, "and the river isn't very far now."

They trudged on, catching here and there faint glimpses of the coming sunrise.

"Here we are at the river," she cried.

"And now what?" he asked.

She took hold of his hand and, as she led him down a bank, said:

"We'll have to go up stream some ways, but not very far, as I wasn't much wrong. I knew these woods even in the dark."



“I cannot leave you this way—I cannot deceive you. I did steal that horse.”

"I don't understand you."

"See!" she pointed to a boat. "You know I was gone a long time the other day. Well, I brought that boat over here, me and an old negro woman."

He uttered an exclamation of surprise, and she giggled.

Still holding his hand, she led him to the boat.

"Row to the other side and float down under the willows," she said.

He stepped in the boat, still holding her hand.

"I must say good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye," she whispered, still holding his hand and looking back toward her home. A short silence followed.

"Net," he said, "I cannot leave you this way—I cannot deceive you. I did steal that horse."

"Oh!" she sobbed, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Don't, angel, I tell you that I stole the horse."

"I am going with you," she said, and the boat floated out on the current of the sun-blazing stream.

A traveler in Missouri noticing a large number of people following a wagon, rode up to an old fellow who sat on a fence and asked the cause of such a large procession.

"W'y, they air takin' Sam Bates out ter the graveyard."

"He must have been a very popular man."

"Wall, I should reckon he was."

"Held a high position, I suppose."



"Stood at the top."

"What was his business?"

"Chopped co'd wood fur a livin', I b'lieve."

"What, do people in this country pay so much attention to wood-choppers?"

"Look yare, my friend, Sam wuz the handiest man with a fiddle thar wuz in this neighborhood. He could jest natchully make a fiddle cluck like a hen. I don't know how it is whar you come frum but in this here community we don't pay no attention ter whut er man does fur er livin', but we measure him fur whut he is wuth ter society."

A banker, while talking to one of his clerks, said: "Arthur, a man never amounts to much in this life until he gets married."

"I think so myself, sir," the young man replied.

"Glad you are so ready to agree with me, Arthur, for I have taken quite a liking to you. How old are you?"

"Twenty-one, sir."

"Plenty old to marry, Arthur; and I would advise you to begin looking around."

"I have been looking around and I have found a young lady, and she has promised to be my wife."

"Good. I hope she is worthy of you."

"I think she is, sir."

"Glad you think so. Who is she, Arthur?"

"Your daughter, sir."

The young fellow does not work at the bank now.

Mr. George Lansing, brother of Lord Glencove, came to America some time ago with a party of capitalists, and joined in an enterprise to purchase large tracts of pine lands in Arkansas. Mr. Lansing, before he met any of the squatters, wrote many amusing letters home concerning them, for, being an Englishman, he fancied that he knew much of these people, and did not think that personal contact with them would extend the already broad territory of his views. He wrote a number of dialogues, in which he always "wound the squatter up," but he is wiser now.

Several days ago he set out on an expedition to visit a tract of land lying among the hills in a part of the country which had not been viewed by the members of the company. It was suggested that Mr. Lansing should be accompanied by some one who knew the country, but he hooted at the idea, wise owl, and declared that a man who had held his own in the jungles of India was eminently able to take care of himself anywhere in a bloody American state.

One evening after Mr. Lansing had gained a rough and thinly populated district, he was overtaken by a rain storm. In vain he sought shelter. Darkness came on, and missing the road, which had narrowed down to a mere bridle-path, he wandered around in the woods, alternately choked by grape-vines and sawed by green-briars. The lightning illustrated the sulphurous imprecations which he called down upon the American government, and as he lost his hat and was struck on the forehead by his horse, who threw up his head to

avoid a briar, he shook his damp hand at the blackness above, and in a loud oath, questioned the purity of our institutions. At last he saw a light glimmering faintly among the dripping trees and tangled underbrush. Slowly guiding his horse in the direction whence came the welcome gleam, he at last reached a low rail fence, surrounding a small log house. Mr. Lansing shouted.

"Hello, yourself!" exclaimed a voice, as a man poked his head from the door.

"Who lives here?"

"I do."

"Of course. What is your name?"

"What's *your* name?"

"George Lansing. Does Simon Butt live here?"

"Not at present."

"Where does he live?"

"Don't know."

"Did he ever live here?"

"No."

"Then, why do you say 'not at present'?"

"'Cause he don't live here at present."

"My friend, I am wet and——"

"Must 'uv been out in the rain?"

"Yes, I was in all of that heavy shower."

"No, yer wa'n't."

"I say I was."

"I say yer wa'n't. Some o' that shower fell here, an' I know yer wa'n't here when it fell. Good-night," closing the door.

"Say, there!" called the Englishman.





“Confound yer pollyticks, stranger, an’ mo’n that, dod blame yer religion.”



"Wall," opening the door.

"I say I am wet and——"

"Must 'uv been out in the rain."

"And I'm hungry."

"Didn't have nuthin' to eat, mebby."

"I'd like to stay here until morning."

"All right, help yerself," closing the door.

"Hello, there!" cried the Englishman.

"Hello, yerself!" again opening the door.

"What sort of a man are you?"

"Democrat. What yer own pollyticks?"

"Confound your politics. I——"

"Confound yer pollyticks, stranger, an' mo'n that, dod blame yer religion."

"Look here, my good fellow."

"One o' the best fellers yer ever seed."

"Glad to hear it. I am wet——"

"Must 'uv been out in the rain."

"I don't want any of your blasted foolishness, you know. I want to come in."

"All right, never said yer couldn't."

The floor of the little room seemed to be covered with children, and from a bed in a corner a head with long hair protruded. The squatter raked the chunks together—those people always keep a fire, winter and summer—and the cheerful blaze, shooting up the spacious "stack" chimney, invited the stranger to take off his coat and hold his steaming hands out to feel the warmth.

"How far is it to Simon Butt's?"

"Young Simon or old Simon?"

"Either one, I suppose."

"Wall, they live about a mile apart. Old Simon lives on one hill an' young Simon on t'other."

"But how far from here?"

"Yer know whar the spout spring is?"

"No."

"Wall, that's bad, fur it's the best water in the curmunity."

"Does Mr. Butt live near the spring?"

"Who, old Simon?"

"Yes."

"Wall, he don't live as close to it as young Simon does."

"How can I find the spring?"

"By goin' to young Simon's."

"But how can I find young Simon's?"

"By goin' to the spring."

"See here, old man, I have fooled with you long enough."

"Thank the Lord!" said the squatter's wife, nervously jerking her tangled hair. "Wish yer would git through with yer transacshun an' let a body git some sleep. Tildy, if yer don't keep them hoofs still I'll make yer think yer air pizenened."

"Can I lie down here on the floor and sleep?"

"Don't know, podner. Yer oughter know whut yer ken do."

"May I, then?"

"Yes, yer may; then or now; it makes no difference."

The Englishman was soon asleep. Early in the morning he was awakened by a "splutter" of hot grease from the frying-pan.

"If yer don't want ter git burnt, stir 'round," said the old lady. He stirred around, and soon discovered that he was only a few hundred yards from his destination.

"Why didn't you tell me it was so near?" exclaimed Mr. Lansing.

"Why didn't yer ax?" replied the squatter. "Yer kep' on wantin' ter know how fur it was, but didn't ax how near. Sich folks as you oughter larn how to talk 'fore yer leave home. Wall, er good mornin'."

In some parts of Missouri and Arkansas there are a number of people that make a doubtful living by hauling hoop-poles fifteen or twenty miles and then selling them for enough money to buy a peck of corn-meal and a piece of thin bacon about a foot square.

Several days ago an old fellow who had sold his load of poles started home with his bag of meal on the seat beside him, and with his piece of bacon (to protect it from the sun) swung under the wagon. Just as he had halted in a small stream to let his horse drink, an acquaintance, going out to the railway station, came along.

"Hello, Alf, jest gittin' home?"

"Yes, 'lowed I'd poke on back. Whicher way you goin'?"

"'Lowed, I did, that I'd go out to the station an' see ef thar's any discussion goin' on thar. Am so clost penned up at home, you know, that I like to git outen the way of the wimin folks onct in awhile. Dun sold yo' poles, I see."

"Yes, an' am goin' to take my little modicum of meat an' meal home so mur an' the chillun kin have some Sunday eaten'. Durin' week days, you know, they don't eat nuthin' but b'iled co'n an' sweet potatoes, an' you better believe a little meat do bring 'em out powerful. I do believe that youngest boy of mine—that ar' one we call 'Drap Shot'—kin eat a string of meat as long as frum here to the station. Thar's many a rich man that would give big money fur that boy's appetite. An' thar's mur! You better believe she ain't slow herself. I have know'd that woman to eat a whole b'iled pumpkin. Wall, I reckon I better be a shovin'."

"Say, is that yo' dog?"

"Whar's any dog?" the wagoner asked, and then looked round just in time to see the dog making off with his meat. The unfortunate man uttered a yell of rage and jumped off the wagon, but the dog—and he had doubtless been following the wagon for some time seeking for an opportunity to seize the meat—scampered over the hill and was soon out of sight. The disconsolate man returned to the wagon to find the intelligence of another disaster awaiting



OPIE READ IN THE OZARKS.



“Lawed, I did, that I’d go out to the station an’ se thar’s any discussion goin’ on thar.”

him, for, in his haste to reach the ground, the sack of meal had been knocked off into the stream and had been borne away by the current. It was some time before he could say anything, and when "at length his tongue came back to him," he took off his old white cotton hat, wiped his perspiring brow with it, and in a solemn voice said:

"Alf, this here is whut a man gits fur goin' off atter the vanaties of the flesh. I wa'n't satisfied with b'iled co'n an' sweet potatoes, but must have midlin' meat an' sich. The Lawd won't put up with pride in this here world, Alf. He jest nachully won't do it."

"Your part of the country is developing rapidly, is it not?" was asked of a Missouri man.

"Oh, yes, mighty fast. Why, sir, only a few years ago we still used the old-fashioned pepper-box pistol, but we now have double-action revolvers that would reflect credit on any community."

The superintendent of the Arkansaw penitentiary, upon meeting old Foster, who had served a term in prison, asked:

"What are you doing now?"

"Preachin', sah."

"What, preaching when you have just come out of the penitentiary?"

"Oh, yas, sah, fur dat doan make no diffunce. Dat's de time fur er man ter preach, case den er nigger by bein' shet up wid so many white men knows whut



“You don’t intend to work, then?”  
“Well, not if I can help it. I ain’t able.”



sins dar is in de worl'. Ef yer wants ter 'gust er nigger, boss, pen him up wid white men."

Baxter Plummer, an old negro well known in the neighborhood of the recent "race war" in Arkansaw, was sitting on a stump in his dooryard, repairing the bow of an ox-yoke, when a man of pleasant address approached him and said:

"Is this Mr. Baxter Plummer?"

"Yas, sah, you hit de nail on de head dat time, sho'. Whut ken I do fur yer, sah?" he added, as he put the ox-bow down beside the stump.

"Oh, nothing at all. I was merely passing, and, not being in a hurry, thought I would stop a few moments and chat with you. I have heard of you a number of times. J. W. Buck, who keeps the plantation supply store, has told me a good deal about you."

"Yas, sah; yas, an' I lay dat he didn't tell you dat I hab eber 'glected ter pay fur ever'thing dat I got dar on er credic."

"Upon the contrary, he says that you are a man of most unsullied integrity."

"Did he say dat? Er haw, haw! Man o' most solid 'tegrity, I reckon I is. Oh, sah, I's gittin' 'long putty well in dis yere life. Eats ez much ez de av'age man do, chaws er fa'r artickle o' terbacker, an', altergedder, 'joys merse'f putty well."

"Baxter, were you living here during the recent trouble between the whites and the blacks?"



"Been er livin' right yere fur twen'y yeah, sah."

"A good long time. You have never had any trouble, have you?"

"None er tall, sah."



"Oh, sah, I's gittin' 'long putty well in dis yere life. Eats es much ez de av'age man do, chaws er fa'r artickle o' terbacker, an', altergedder, 'joys merse'f putty well."

"Suppose a race war should come up, what would you do?"

"I'd say, 'Hol' on, yere, folks; hol' on, yere.' "

"Yes, but suppose a number of blacks should ride

up to your house, and, in an excited manner, tell you that they had been fired upon by the whites, and were to beg you to assist them, what would you do?"

"I'd say, 'Genermen, whut sorter stock you ridin'?"

"You don't mean to say that you won't fight?"

"No, sah, but I tell you whut I do mean. I means dat I ain't got nuthin' ter do wid all dis yere foolishness."

"Of course you haven't, but suppose you were shoved into a fight with a white man?"

"Yas, an' spozen I wuz shoved out ergin right erway?"

"Let me put the case. You are going along the road——"

"Yas, I's gwine 'long de road."

"Don't interrupt me. You are going along the road and you meet a white man. You and he fall into conversation, then you get into a dispute, then into a quarrel and then into a fight. You don't want to hurt the man, but above all you don't want him to hurt you; so, in an ardent defense of yourself, you kill the white man. Then you would find yourself in an embarrassing situation. You would be accused of murder, and, unless your friends should assist you, you should, without much ado, be hanged. So, you see, acting even in self-defense, you could bring about a race war."

"Yas, sah, dat's er fack, but I think I'd be er little too sharp fur dat. Ef I wuz ter kill him, I would drag him ter de water an' fling him in, an' den de folks

would say dat de Hon. Mr. So-an'-So dun drowned hisse'f."

"Yes, but the bruises on his body would prove a greater violence than mere drowning; and again, suppose there was no water handy?"

"Wall, sah, I'd bury de generman."

"But his grave, on being discovered, would lead to an investigation."

"Yas, but I wouldn't let it be skovered."

"How could you help it?"

"W'y, sah, I'd drag de generman off in de leaves, 'side de road, till night come, an' den, while nobody wuz passin', I would bury him right in de middle o' de road. Den I'd beat down de dirt an' den I'd chop down er tree an' let it fall 'cross de place so it would look like somebody been atter er coon, you see, an' den I would chop out er log so folks could pass, an' de fresh-lookin' dirt da would think wuz made by de fallin' o' de tree, an' dar wouldn' be no questions axed. Folks might wonder whut had 'come o' de Hon. So-an'-So, but nobody wouldn' think erbout lookin' down un'er de road. So Mr. Buck says I is er good man, do he? Wall, sah, lemme tell yer, I doan hab no trouble gittin' whut I wants frum dat man, caze he knows I's so hones'."

"Yes, Mr. Buck thinks a great deal of you. Well, I must go. By the way, what ever became of Tobe Grant?"

"Who, dat yaller man?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he lef' de còuntry some time ergo."

"How do you know?"

"Wall, I reckon he lef', caze I ain't seed him fur some time."

"Don't you suppose that you would have seen him had you looked in the right place?"

"I doan' un'erstan' you. Whut you come talkin' ter me so foolish fur? Dat man has been gone 'way frum yere mo'n six yeah."

"You ought to know."

"How come I ought to know?"

"You buried him in the road. Steady, now. Make the slightest break, and I'll shoot you. His body was found this morning. Steady, I say."

The visitor drew a pistol.

"How you know it is his body? You kain't prube it. I gwine hab de law take holt o' you fur comin' 'roun' yere 'cusin' me diser way."

"A large brass ring that he always wore on his left middle finger has been identified, and, the truth is, you killed him. Steady, now."

"He tried ter kill me. He tried ter choke me ter death!"

"That may be true, but you killed him."

"How you find it out?"

"Why, you have just as good as told me."

"By telling how I would bury er man in de road?"

"Yes."

"Wait er minit. You is one o' deze yere 'tectives, ain't you?"

"Yes."





"I gwine hab de law take holt o' you fur comin' 'roun' yere 'cusin' me diser way."

"Wait er minit. An' I jes stood yere an' gin myse'f erway like er fool, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"Wait er minit. Let me think erbout dis erfair. Doan hol' dat pistol dater way, it mout go off. Huh, stood right yere an' tole all erbout myse'f like er fool. Cap'n, I speck you better take me right out in de woods yere an' hang me, caze I's erfearred dat I ain't got sense ernuff ter go ter town wid you. Ef er man hader tole me dat I wuz sicher fool ez dis I would er hit him, sho. Who is all dem men comin'?"

"They are coming to help me take you to town. We don't want your friends to attempt any foolishness, you know. I have been waiting for those men and have therefore talked longer than was actually necessary. Let me put these handcuffs on you."

"Wall, ef dis doan beat anything I eber seed. Huh, ef er man had tole me dat I wuz sich er fool I wouder mixed wid him right dar. Man bo'n o' woman is o' er few days an' er blame fool."

"How many cows does your father milk?" asked a man of a boy that sat on a fence near a Missouri homestead.

"Don't milk none," the boy answered.

"I'm sorry to hear it, for I am about to start a cheese factory in this neighborhood, and want to know how much milk I can depend on. So your father don't milk any?"

"No, pap don't."

"Well, how many cows has your father?"

"He ain't got none, pap hain't."

"Well, I declare, and yet he seems to be very well fixed."

"Yas, reckon he is well fixed."



"Pap's been dead a year or more and blamed ef I can see what he wants with a cow."

"Why don't he buy some cows?"

"Don't need 'em, I reckon."

"But don't your mother like milk?"

"Oh, yes, mighty fond of it."

"And don't you?"

"Yas, powerful."

"And yet you do without it just because your father don't happen to like it."

"No, don't do without it. Drink a all-fired sight of it."

"Oh, you buy it, I suppose."

"No, we milk it."

"Thought you said your father had no cows."

"I did. Pap's been dead a year or more, and blamed ef I can see what he wants with a cow. If you had a asked me how many cows mam had I could a-told you."

In the neighborhood surrounding Henseley's Grove, a sleepy station on a Southern railway, in Arkansas, there was but one feature to attract attention and that was a young fellow with one leg. His name was Dan Peters; and he had lost his leg one night while trying to save a passenger train. There had been a sudden rise in Goose Creek and the bridge had been swept away. Dan had been to mill that morning and on his way home he found that the bridge was gone, and he knew that it was nearly time for the north-bound passenger train. He was on the right side of the creek. He built a fire on the track and waited. He then tied his old mare to a bush, and about the time he lighted the fire he heard her trying to get loose. He ran to her. She had thrown off the sack of meal and was tugging at the bush. When he came back within reach she let her hind feet fly and kicked him.





"She had thrown off the sack of meal and was tugging at the bush. When he came back within reach she let her hind feet fly and kicked him."

He must have fainted, for it was some time afterward before he knew anything, and then there came the consciousness of two things; one was that his leg was broken and the other was that the fire had gone out. He was suffering intensely, but he knew his duty. He dragged himself up the embankment, and with his benumbed fingers he fumbled with a match. His suffering was so great that it required all his strength of will to keep his mind on the work that he sought to accomplish and he must have fainted again, for a new sensation of pain aroused him—he was sprawling on the track and the match had burned away in his fingers. He heard the train. He uttered a cry. Was his last match gone? He fumbled in his pockets. One was left. But the wood was wet and the kindling had burned out. He saw the headlight. He snatched off his coat. He tore off his shirt, and struck the match. It burned. He touched it to his shirt, and then with a struggle he stood on one foot and high above his head he waved the blazing garment. Then he fell—fell and rolled down the embankment. The train stopped. A man went forward with a lantern. On the track he found some fragments of wood, and a smoking rag; he saw that the bridge was gone and looked about but could see no one. He called but received no answer.

“I wonder what we are backing for,” a passenger growled. A party of men were drinking wine in the smoking compartment of the sleeper.

“Helloa, we’re going back.”

“Let her roll.”

It was daylight when the boy's father found him. He was taken home and the doctor said that his leg must come off; and it did come off. The railway company paid the surgeon's bill. It was said that something of a substantial nature would be done for the boy; but a great financier in the East got control of the road shortly afterward and nothing was done. The boy's father wrote to him. "My little fellow ain't got but one leg and the reason of it is he saved a passenger train"; but the letter was not answered. A lawyer called on the superintendent of the road.

"Yes, something ought to be done about that," said the superintendent.

"Something must be done about it," the lawyer replied.

"Not must, but should," the superintendent rejoined. "This is practically another road, you know."

"But justice makes the same demand," this lawyer insisted.

"Ah, but there can be no demand in this matter. The boy was not hurt by the train."

"No, but he lost his leg while saving the train."

"Yes, quite heroic, I'm sure; and as I say, something ought to be done, but you see the affairs of the road are in an unsettled condition, and the stock has gone down. I think that something may be done as soon as we get straightened out."

Months, years passed and nothing was done.

It was a chilly day, and a group of idle men sat about the fire in the railway station at Henseley's Grove. A lank fellow, humping over, picked a nail



off the stove and dropped it when it burned him; a man in brown jeans trod upon a yellow dog's foot and made him howl; the station master put an oyster can half full of water, with a string hanging from it, on the stove; a loud-talking man stamped the mud off his boots, and said that he believed it was going to sleet; and then there came a thump, thump, thump, thump.

"Helloa, Dan Peters."

"How are you, gentlemen?"

"Do yo' laig pain yo' much, this changoble weather?" an old man asked.

"Yes, a good deal. Don't think I slep' mo'n a wink last night."

"How long has it been since you lost your leg?" a stranger asked.

"It's been a good while—let me see, fo' years the secon' of this month."

"How did you lose it?"

"Wall, a ole mar' kicked me, but I don't reckon it would have been tuck off ef I hadn't worried around tryin' to stop a passenger train so she wouldn't run off the bridge down yander."

"Oh, you are the hero that stopped that train."

"No; I was the boy that done it, an' I done a pretty good job, they say, but I *am* right sorry that I lost my laig."

The telegraph operator, holding a yellow slip of paper, stepped into the room. "Let us have the news, Charley."

The operator looked at the paper and simply remarked: "Jay Gould is dead."



"Thar, Dan," cried an old man, the weather oracle of the neighborhood, and necessarily a profound thinker, and an accurate forecaster of coming events.

"Thar, Dan," he repeated, "yo' fortune has come at last. *Gentlemen*, I know the ways of this here world and I'm mighty well up with the tricks of rich men, and I'll tell you exactly what's my idee of this case. Gould has kept suthin' back fur Dan, and is goin' to leave it to him by will. You mark my words, all of you. And he won't leave him a cent short of \$5,000."

The oracle's words took effect, and during the next few days Dan was pointed out as one of the Gould heirs. But a newspaper came out and told of the disposition of Gould's property. Dan's name was not mentioned. After having been pointed out as a man marked by fortune, this was a severe blow. Indeed, it was a humiliation, and Dan, unable to bear it, went over to another county where his name was not known. He sought work, but could find none. No one cared to hire a one-legged man. 'People said that if he were of any account he wouldn't go stumping about over the country.

One day Dan was arrested on a charge of stealing ten dollars, and was arraigned before an exceedingly severe old judge. A jury was impaneled; the keen prosecuting attorney came, armed with his authorities, and merciless in the cause of justice.

"Judge," said Dan, getting up and stumping his way to the middle of the room, "I don't think thar was any use fur all this here preparation, for I ain't got nothin'

to deny. I was in that man's carpenter shop—went in thar to get some sort of work, and failed as usual—and I seed him when he put ten dollars in a tin box. To me thar was in that box suthin' to eat and a way to git home. I couldn't walk home, fur it's mighty bad walkin' with only one laig, Jedge; so I said to myself, 'I'll take this money and pay it back if I ever get the chance,' and I took it."

"How did you lose your leg?" the Judge asked.

"Oh, well, I don't like much to tell about it. Kept a passenger train from running off into Goose Creek, one night a long time ago and—"

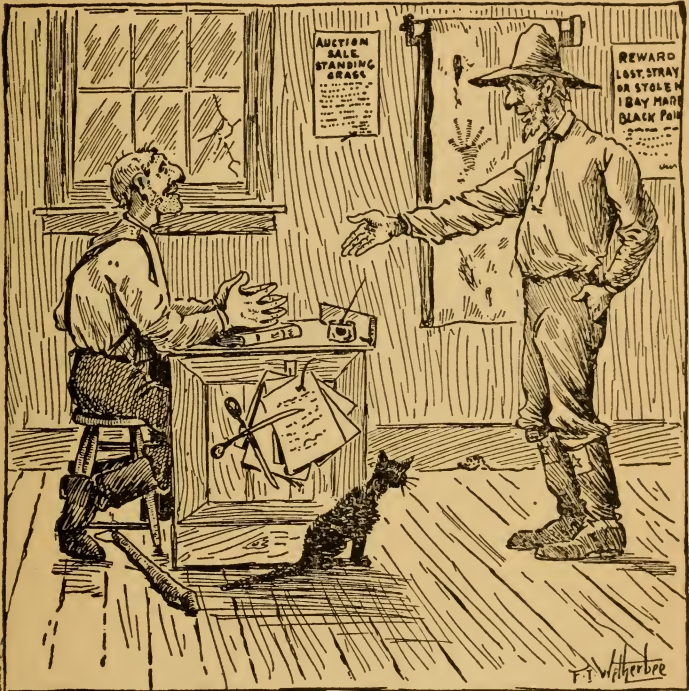
"Hold on," said the Judge, "I heard that the boy who saved that train had been left a good sum of money by Jay Gould."

"The folks in my neighborhood said that he would undoubtedly leave me suthin', Jedge, but he didn't do it."

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the Judge, "I'm going to take the law into my own hands, I don't care what the folks think or what they do at the next election. I'm going to turn this man loose; and more than that, I'll start a subscription for him right here with a hundred dollars. The rest of you may give as little as you like, but I wish you would give something. Young man, you needn't go home, for I'll see that you get employment. I was on that train that night."

The editor of the Hornbeam *Maul* received a visit from Tobe Phillips.

“Look here,” said Mr. Phillips, “last week you spoke of the death of my grandmother, Mrs. Harky.”  
 “Yes, yes, so I did. Anything wrong?”



“The old lady usually tuk a chaw of tobacker about the size of a walnut and I don’t reckon there was a better judge of licker in our neighborhood.”

“You said she was ninety-eight years old and—”  
 “Well, wasn’t she that old?”

“Oh, yes, but you said that she never chewed tobacco and was never drunk in her life.”

"Well, is there anything wrong about that?"

"But don't you understand, it sorter reflects on us—on her."

"How so."

"Wall, now I'll tell you. I don't reckon there is a more respectable lot of people anywhere than we are—"

"That's all right, old fellow. I didn't mean any reflection. You see, when a very old man dies the newspapers, particularly the temperance publications, say that he never used tobacco or liquor; and what I said was merely a take-off."

"Yes," said the visitor, "your intentions were all right, but what you say ain't the truth. The old lady usually tuk a chaw of tobacker about the size of a walnut and I don't reckon there was a better jedge of licker in our neighborhood. She was sorter proud of her record in regard to licker, and if it won't be too much trouble to you I wish you would make a sort of correction."

A three shell fakir had just begun operations on the outskirts of an Arkansas village when an old fellow wearing a green vest and a long jeans coat came along, and who, after looking for a while at the manipulation of the shells, said:

"You've got some sort of trick, I reckon."

"Oh, not very much of a trick. Sort of a game that's as fair for one as it is for the other."

"Yas, and I reckon a good deal fairer for the one than the other."

"No," replied the fakir, continuing to work the



shells, "I don't think so. I have lost considerable money at it in my time."

"Why don't you do something else, then?"



"I 'bieve I'll go you once jest for luck. It's under that one right thar."

"Truth is I have been at this business so long that I don't know how to make a living any other way."

"Raised to it, I reckon."

"Yes, my father done the same thing."

"And he lost a good deal of money, too, I reckon."

"Got broke up and had to quit the business."

"And I reckon you 'low to foller in his footsteps."

"Not if I can help it; still, I've got to take my chances."

"I reckon you air right about that. Say, how do the thing work?"

"I'll show you: You see I put this pea down here and cover it with a shell."

"That's easy enough done," said the old fellow, wiping his tobacco-stained mouth on the tail of his coat.

"Oh, yes, putting it in there is easy enough, but the thing is to guess which shell it is under."

"Wall, but I don't have to guess when I seed which one you put it under."

"Well, you are entitled to your opinion, but I'll bet you five dollars you can't guess which shell the pea is under."

"I 'bleve I'll go you once jest for luck. It's under that one right thar."

The fakir lifted up the shell indicated and there was the pea.

"Yes, sir, you got me that time. Suppose we try it again. Now I'll bet you ten you can't tell which one it's under."

"Up with yo' money. I'm yo' man."

The money was put up. "Under this one," said the old fellow.

"Well, you happened to lose that time," said the fakir, taking up the shell and then taking the money.

"Want to try it again?"

"No, I believe not," the old fellow replied sauntering away. Shortly afterward he was stopped by an acquaintance, who said: "Jerry, I thought you had more sense than that."

"Than whut?" he asked in surprise.

"Why, I didn't think you would let a man come along and beat you out of your money that easily."

"Has anybody beat me outen any money?"

"Why, of course. That fellow back there beat you out of five dollars."

"That so? Now let me calculate a little. I bet him five the fust time and won; and the second time I bet ten and lost."

"Yes, which means that he beat you out of five."

"It do look a little that way, but let me sorter explain. I knowed that he wanted to draw me on and that I could git the fust bet, and I did; but the next time I put up a counterfeit ten. He has mixed it up with his other money and now couldn't tell whar he got it. My son is a constable, you know, and atter awhile he will pull the feller for havin' counterfeit money and then we will run him in and fine him and make a few dollars by the operation. Times air so hard that it do push a honest man might'ly, and when I manage to pick up a five now and then I consider that I have done putty well."

An old fellow who had just served a sentence of ten years in the penitentiary was asked if he enjoyed his freedom.

"Well," said he, "it kinder suits me until meal time comes and then it sorter don't."

"Don't like to work, eh?"

"Well, no. If I had I wouldn'ter went to the pen."

"How did they feed you?"

"Tolerable. It wa'n't a barbecue, still it did putty well. Only one objection."

"What was that?"

"Had to work for it."

"Did they ever whip you?"

"Well, they teched me with a strap onct."

"Hurt you, I suppose."

"Well, it didn't feel good."

"Do you ever expect to go back there?"

"That sorter depends."

"Upon what?"

"Upon whuther or no they ketch me."

"You don't intend to work, then?"

"Well, not if I can help it. I ain't able."

"You look to be a very strong man."

"Yes, but workin' makes me lonesome."

"What was the hardest thing you had to bear in the penitentiary?"

"Jaw."

"What?"

"Jaw. Young preachers would come around and talk to us."

"Why did you object to the young preachers?"

"Well, we had to sit and listen till they got through preachin'. It made me lonesome."



He died about the time the war came up. Who? The old negro, dark yellow, with red freckles, knock-kneed, deep of voice. He used to come to town with shuck horse-collars and great twists of tobacco strung on a hemp string. His loud laugh was heard on the square; and when the tavern bell rang for dinner, he would saunter off with his merchandise thrown over his shoulder and stand at the kitchen doorway, waiting for something to eat. He appeared to belong to no man, and yet he was not under the "free nigger's" disgrace. Young women entrusted their perfumed notes to him; young men sent him after whisky. He brought the first June apples tied up in a red bandana handkerchief; in a sack he carried the first watermelon of the season. He found the first partridge nest in the wheat; he knew where the guinea hen laid her speckled eggs. He liked to hang about the stables where blanketed horses were training for the race; and he knew the pedigree of the flyers, the time that they had made, their ages, their temperaments. He knew the numbers of all the railway engines that came through the town, and from a distance was wont to cry, "Yander comes ole twenty-six." He was devoted to children, but always appeared to be on the verge of a quarrel with them. "You gwine fool roun' yere till you git hurt," he would say. "An' mo'n dat, de ole Bad Man gwine snatch you up one deze days an' run off wid you un'er his arm. He's dun had his eye on you fur some time. He ain't gwine put up wid yo' foolishness much longer; he doan like de way you treat deze ole folks dat 'longs



“Young women entrusted their perfumed notes to him;  
young men sent him after whisky.”

ter de Lawd. You better look roun'. He ain' fur off. Look at you dar now, wipin' yo' greasy han's on yo' cloze! Ought ter be 'shamed o' yo' se'f ter spile dem nice gyarmints dat Marse John dun gib you. Whut, you flung dat braid 'an meat erway? Neber mine, boy, dar'll come er time w'en you wish you had dat vidults. Oh, I knows you is mighty brash now, but you'll come down atter w'ile, an' you'll come down *ker bip!* Dat's how you'll come down. De Lawd neber did lub er chile dat flings vidults erway. De Lawd jes nachully spizes sich er chile ez dat. But you'll be all right ef you 'haves yo'se'f. You'se 'er putty chile, anyhow; an' fo' gracious, I does b'lebe you gwine be good. Go on in de house now, and fetch me er biscuit wid butter an' sugar on it. Dat's er bright chile, now; go on. I know whar dar's er ole coon libs in er tree, an' it ain' gwine be long 'fo' I go dar an' git him; an' I ain' gwine teck nobody wid me. I ain' gwine teck no boy, no how. Whut's dat? Will I teck you ef you fetches me dat biscuit? Lemme see 'bout dat. Wall, yas, I'll teck you; but you mus' put plenty o' sugar an' butter on it, you yere?"

He appeared to grow no older as time passed; for the boy that brought him the sugared biscuit grew to manhood, married, and heard his own son tell that the old man was going to show him where a coon lived.

Strange flags waved in the town, and men who had been gentle were now fierce of countenance. Drums thundered in the streets, and down by the spring where the voice of the exhorter had so often been heard



urging the "sinner man" to come to Christ, the bugler stood and blew his startling call. War was in the air; the horses that had been wont to pace, galloped now; and the lawyers about the courthouse talked not of witnesses and changes of venue, but of Mississippi rifles and artillery. But the old man came in with his shuck collars and his twists of tobacco, and a ruffian snatched his tobacco and threw his collars into the street. His day was done; the man of peace was no longer respected, it was not a time to amuse children with stories, but to kill men with guns. The old man disappeared in the smoke, went far away where the haze hung over the hill, and no one gave him a thought. The negroes heard a loud cry from the North, and startled, stood in groups wondering at their freedom. But the old man was not among them. His freedom had come, but had not been shouted by man. It had been whispered by death.

Two Little Rock negroes engaged in a quarrel when one struck the other on the head with a wagon-spoke. The negro that had received the blow, rubbed his head for a moment and then said:

"Look yere, Stephen, dar's one thing dat is er powerful blessin' fur you."

"Whut's dat?"

"De fact dat my head is ez thick ez it is. W'y ef my head wa'n't no thicker den de common run o' heads, dat lick would er killed me an' den you would er been tuck befo' er jestic o' de peace an' fined mighty nigh twenty dollars. You'd better thank de Lawd dat I ain't got one deze yere aig-shell heads."





“You’d better thank de Lawd dat I ain’t got one deze yere aig-shell heads.”

Old George Jespin, of Missouri, while in Chicago the other day, went to see the ossified man. When the shudder-inspiring freak was stood up in full view of the wonder-murmuring audience, old George gazed with drop-jaw astonishment, and then, speaking to a man who stood near, said:

“You don’t mean ter say that he’s all bone?”

“I haven’t said anything at all,” the man answered,

"but if it's any satisfaction to you I will say that he's all bone."

"Wall, he beats my time and my time hain't been so mighty slow, nuther. I lived in Indiana one year—rented the old Jimison place, an' not so long ago tuck a trip to Iowa, but I must say that I never seed nothin' like this here before. Kin he eat?"

"Didn't you hear the lecturer say that he can eat anything?"

"Yas, but I didn't know whuther it was the truth or not. I don't reckon he ever has the rheumatiz in them shanks o' hizn."

"I suppose not."

"But I wouldn't take his place fur his wages. Would you?"

"No."

"I wonder ef he's a Democrat."

"I don't know."

"Tell you what I'll do with you: I'll go out an' shake you to see who pays fur the licker."

"I don't drink."

"Huh, you must be a osterfied man yo'se'f. Wall, I'll shake you ter see who pays fur the snack."

"No."

"Sort o' clost communionist, ain't you?"

"Don't bother me."

"Come down, an' I'll set 'em up."

"Don't bother me, I tell you."

"You ain't so very friendly, air you? Say, it wouldn't be safe fur that osterfied man ter go down in Missouri."

"Why?"

"Becaze some feller would shove him in a bone mill an' have him out on a turnip patch in less'n no time. Wall, I'll hatter leave you now. I allus make it a p'int ter move along when I find out that folks ain't hankerin' atter my s'ciety. Won't drink?"

"No."

"Won't eat?"

"No, I tell you."

"Wall, come on, then, an' we'll play a game o' poker."

"I'm with you," the man replied.

"Wall, now, I am glad ter see that you ain't all bone. I don't play, but I'm glad ter know that you do—glad ter know that you ain't entirely lost ter the beauties o' this world."

A negro had a number of fish exposed for sale on a table placed near the edge of the sidewalk. A white man came along and, bending over, began to sniff and snort.

"Whut's de matter wid you?" the negro asked.

"Nothing; I was only smelling of these fish."

"Whut you want to come roun' yere smellin' o' 'em fur? Da ain't yo' property. Is it the right thing ter do, goin' roun' de neighborhood a-smellin' o' udder folks property?"

"I smelled of them to see if they were fresh."

"Whut business is it o' you'n whudder da fresh ur not when you ain't got no intrust in 'em! Is dat de way folks does whar you wuz raised—go 'roun' ter

see whudder things dat doan 'long ter you is fresh ur not?"

"I didn't know but what I wanted to buy one of these fish."

"Now you talkin' like er man o' de 'mercial life. Yere's er fine feesh, sah; dis yere wall-eyed pike. He's mighty fresh—ain't been outen de water mo'n ha'f er hour."

"How long had he been dead before they found him?"

"Whut's dat, sah?"

"I say how long had this fish been a corpse before the remains were discovered?"

"Go on erway frum yere, now; go on, caze I doan wanter hatter hurt you. Feesh layin' yere flutterin' fitten ter kill hiss'f an' you wanter know how long he been dead. Go on."

"Fluttering! Why, the flies have blown him."

"Yas, an' da'll blow you, too, ef you doan go on erway frum yere. Times hard ernuff widout you comin' 'roun' yere 'sultin' de trade. Go on, caze ef you doan I kain' keep my han's offen you much longer."

"To tell you the truth, old man, I don't want fresh fish. I am a manufacturer of Limberger, and I use spoiled fish to flavor the cheese."

"Huh, is dat whar dat 'fume come frum? I sorter thought so long time ergo. Yere's er feesh right ober yere, sah, dat's been dead er good while. Smell o' him. Ain't he loud ernuff fur you?"

"I don't want that sort of fish; I want a wall-eyed pike about like this one. I'm sorry he's so fresh, for



when I find a fish that just suits me, I am willing to give almost any price for it."

"Yas, sah, dat is a monst'us fine feesh, sho's you live. Man come long yere jes' now an' tole me he tuck him outen de water 'bout haffer hour ergo, but I knows dat man, an' I reckon dar ain't no bigger liar nowhar. Come try ter 'pose on me datter way. W'y, dis feesh is been dead er week at leas'. Jes' smell o' him. Ain't he got de 'fume an' de flaber?"

"That's all right, old man. I have found out what I wanted to—I have discovered that you sell rotten fish and I am going to have you arrested."

"Didn't I tell you dat ef you didn't git erway frum yere I couldn't keep my han's offen you? Spen' you' nights in stealin' ballot-boxes an' den come erroun' in de day an' 'sult er man's trade. Git outen de way ur I'll hit you wid dis feesh you dun slandered."

Two old-time negroes met in the road. "Good maw-nin', Mr. Green, good mawnin', sah."

"Good mawnin' ter yo'se'f, Mr. Jackson. How's you gittin' erlong?"

"Fust rate, 'ceptin' er little trouble in de congrega-tion once in er while. Doan hab no trouble in yo' church, does you?"

"Better blebe I does, sah; better blebe dat fack. De bruders an' de sisters gits ter rarin' an' er chargin' ever once in er while, an' ef I didn' stay right dar plum by 'em ever' thing would be dun gone ter rack an' ruin. Wall, now, comin' down frum de fam'ly o' de Lawd ter

de fam'ly o' de flesh, how's yo' own folks gittin er-long?"

"Putty well, 'siderin'."

"How's dem twins?"

"We ain't got no twins."

"Look yere, you doan mean ter tell me dat you ain't got no twins down ter yo' house."

"Yes, I does."

"But you did hab twins down dar, didn' you?"

"No, not twins, but lemme tell you we'se come in one o' it ten times—jest come in one."

"Wall, I knowed you eider had twins down dar ur a mighty norrer skape. Good mawnin', sah. I mus' go on down yander an' look atter de fam'ly o' de Lawd."

A man charged with robbing a stage coach in a remote county of Arkansas was brought to trial the other day, and although he had numerous friends, was sentenced to the penitentiary for a term of ninety-nine years. Immediately after the sentence had been pronounced, the prisoner's face lighted up with an expression of joy; and, moving about the court room, he began to shake hands with his friends.

"Why, Bob," said a friend, "you act as if you were glad."

"I am," the prisoner answered.

"Did you expect to be hanged?"

"Oh, no."

"Then how can you be pleased at your sentence?"

"Why, you see I was only sentenced for ninety-nine years."

"Yes, I understand that."

"But," said the prisoner, smiling broadly, "I was afraid that instead of ninety-nine they might send me up for a hundred. I tell you that to a man who is getting along in life one year makes a good deal of difference."

A Little Rock negro went up to the general delivery window of the postoffice and asked if there were any letters for Mr. Phil Potter.

"No," the clerk replied.

"Look yare, ain' you sorter wraung 'bout dat?"

"I tell you there is nothing for you."

"I know you tole me dat, but I's got reasons fur b'l'ebin' dat you's wraung."

"I don't care what you've got. Get away from here."

"I ken do dat, sah, wid de grace o' de possuls, but it's mighty cuis dat dar ain' no letter yare fur me, I ken tell you dat right now."

He turned away, and, muttering to himself, said: "Mighty strange whut come o' dat letter, fur I put it in dar las' night merse'f. Fotch er lot er niggers down yare ter see me git dat letter out, an' it ain't on de premises. Mebby dat white man didn' put my name on it right. Folks kai' speck me ter be er mudwump ef da treats me like dis. Gwine lose my 'fluence ef er change ain't tuck putty soon. Gwine git somebody ter send me one deze yare tilly-grams."

In a restaurant. Fat man takes up a glass of beer. Scrawny fellow sitting opposite.

"Mister, ho-ho-hold on—on——"

"What's the matter with you?"

"W'y, do-do-don't drink that—that——"

"I will drink it. You temperance cranks are getting to be a trifle too impudent. It's none of your business how much beer I drink." [Drinks the beer.]

"Oh, I know it's none of my bus-bus-business. Saw a fly in—in—it, and did-did-didn't think you ought to—to—swallow it, but you did-did. Wa-wa-wait; what's your hurry?"

"Are those eggs fresh?" a woman asked of a negro grocer.

"Dat's whut da is. Jedge Smif got some o' em las' night, an' he come er roun' yere dis mawnin' an' lowed, he did, dat da wuz de fust rale fresh aigs he has seed fur er year. Oh, dat white pusson is the finest jedge o' aigs I eber seed in all my borned days. W'y, here is de jedge now."

"Look here," said the judge, "those infernal eggs I got from you last night were as rotten as the record of a chicken thief."

"Huh!" the negro gasped.

"You heard what I said, you old scoundrel. Give me twenty-five cents or I will maul you right here."

The negro handed the money over, and when the judge had gone the black rascal turned to the woman and said: "I has seed er good many po' jedges o' aigs, but dat gennerman is de wust I eber did see. Dat man sholy kain't be right in his taste."



Mandy Spillers, a colored lady, swore out a warrant against Zeb Snow.

"What did this man do?" the justice of the peace asked.

"He 'sulted me, sah; dat's whut he done."

"How—what did he say?"

"Didn' say nuthin'."

"How, then, did he insult you?"

"W'y, sah, he come erlong whar I wuz sweepin' de yard an' grabbed me an' kissed me, he did."

"Did you make any outcry?"

"No, sah."

"Did you try to get away from him?"

"Who, me? Look yere, jedge, do you think good-lookin' men is so plenty deze days dat I gwine ter git away frum one when he grab me?"

"But if you were so willing, how was it an insult?"

"How wuz it er insult? W'y, sah, he turned me loose an' went 'cross de yard an' kissed er black imp o' er lady dat is old ernuff ter be my mammy, sah. Dat's how he 'sulted me."

### SOME PLANTATION PHILOSOPHY.

We ken allus furgin er nuder pusson easier den we ken furgin ourselbes. Ef I makes a mistake an' fools roun' de wrong man, it takes me er laung time ter furgin myse'f fur not habin' mo' judgment.

It's de odd sarcumstance dat ketches de man on de hip. We ginnerally knows how ter han'le de sarcumstances whut aint odd, case we knows dar tricks. I

neber wants ter box wid er lef' handed man nor rassle wid er bow-laiged pusson.

I ain't got nothin' ergin er pusson whut likes ter war rings an' shiny pins, but I doan think dat such pussons eber 'complishes much good till arter da draps dat sorter foolishness. De tree haster shake off de bright bloom 'fore de fruit is gwine ter come.

I neber wastes my time in wushin' dat I wuz like de man whut is great an' er way up yander. I doan kere how high de buzzard fly—way up 'mong de clouds—he's got ter come down arter er while an' be jis ez low ez a bird whut couldn' fly ha'f so high.

Some o' de sharpest tricks in dis life is played by fools. One time er smart white man tried his best ter beat me outen er part o' my crap an' failed, but de next day er fool nigger come er long an' beat me outen two bales o' cotton.

When er pusson knows ever'thing else in de world, he is den nearly reddy ter size up er 'oman.

Man ain't de only critter dat fails ter show gratitude. De mule colt don't lub his mammy atter she stops gibin' milk fur him.

Erbout de greatest pleasures o' dis life comes from our bein' deceived. Er lady wuz er settin' at de winder, listenin' ter er mockin' bird. She almos' tuck er fit o' joy ober de music, but when she found dat it wuz er man dat wuz whistlin' she driv him erway.



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